MISSILE DEFENSE AGENCY
MDA In-depth
Making Ballistic Missile Defense A Reality...

PATRIOT Advanced Capability-3

The U.S. is becoming increasingly concerned about the proliferation of ballistic missiles or the technology necessary to build this capability to many of the nations of concern and terrorist organizations. The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) has been given the mission to design a system that will enable the U.S. to protect the homeland, U.S. forces abroad and Allies. To do this, MDA is developing a layered Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) that will combine several programs into one system capable of destroying an enemy missile from shortly after launch to shortly before impact on the intended target. One of the most mature elements of the BMDS is the PATRIOT Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3). PAC-3 is a land-based element building on the previous PATRIOT air and missile defense infrastructure. The design objective of the PATRIOT system is to provide a baseline system capable of being modified to cope with the evolving threat. This alternative minimizes technological risks and provides a means of enhancing system capability through planned upgrades of deployed systems.

As the latest generation of the PATRIOT missile, PAC-3 was developed to provide an increased capability against advanced ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and hostile aircraft. PAC-3 consists of high velocity missiles that will "shoot down" or "intercept" numerous enemy missiles at different distances and at the same time. A few examples of the improvements that were made to upgrade to PAC-3 were increased accuracy against short-range ballistic missiles an enhanced radar, communications, and software systems. With the PAC-3 missile and ground system, threat missiles can be engaged and destroyed at higher altitudes and greater ranges. Another advantage of the upgrade to PAC-3 is that a greater number of interceptors can be controlled at one time than with the earlier PATRIOT missiles. Increased interoperability allows for improved coordination between units as well as enhanced integration with other systems.

While originally planned for transfer to the Army at the start of FY03, Department of Defense notification of the intent to transfer was transmitted to Congress December 31, 2002 - allowing transfer as early as March 1, 2003. Both Research Development Test & Evaluation (RDT&E) and Procurement responsibility are planned to transfer to the Army in FY03. Integration with the BMDS and battle management, command and control enhancements will remain a MDA responsibility.

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